

generally more resistant than those whom we know to-day. Some 164
of the imported diseases have probably been with the Ovimbundu [77]
since they first encountered Europeans, others are more recent,
but all seem to be more deadly to Africans than to Europeans.
This is especially true of the lung complaints, against which the
Ovimbundu have little resistance, and the manner of their life
makes tuberculosis very difficult to check.

Diseases native to the region also constitute a great problem,
notably malaria in its several forms, leprosy, bilharzia, yaws,
goitre, nutritional diseases, &c. The medical staffs of the govern-
ment services and of the missions are well aware of the magnitude [757]
of the problem. The resources at their command, however, are
terribly inadequate. It is urgently necessary that resources be
found and made available.

Religious Development. Before bringing this historical survey to 771
a close it is necessary to take note of certain developments with 177
regard to religion. It was noted in passing that representatives of
the ruling families had, on occasion, returned to the lands of their
exodus to worship their ancestors at the ancient shrines. From
this it is evident that the ancestors of the ruling families became
the gods of the kingdoms over which they ruled. The commoners
kept their own ancestral deities, family by family. Special cults of
various sorts have grown up. From the texts of a hundred to
a hundred and fifty years ago it is evident that many of the
religious practices of the Ovimbundu were then similar to those
which are observed at the present time. Some practices described
in those texts, on the other hand, seem to have ceased or to have
been altered beyond recognition. The very presence of the
Europeans must have affected the rites and their observance, for
their attitudes, whether of approval or of disapproval, registered
over so long a period, must have produced some effect.¹ Degrees
of intensity of this European contact, varying from region to
region, must have had their influence in the development of
regional differences. Some such differences have been noted.²

¹ Battell records that the 'Jagas' would not let him witness certain rites. Pinheiro de Lacerda, writing in 1797, says that he burned more than one hundred oratories called *chacapombo* (*Annaes Mar. e. Col.*, 1845, p. 491).

² W. H. Sanders put down to their closer contact with Europeans the fact that the king's councillors of Viye were not 'a very dignified set. . . . They seemed to have none of that decorum which prevails among the head men of Bailundu' (*Missionary Herald*, 1886, p. 143).

177 The field of Umbundu reactions to cultural influences is a wide
 771 and an important one. Whatever contact the Ovimbundu or their
 progenitors may have had with the early Roman Catholic missions,
 little impress seems to have been made. The cross has been
 [78] adopted as an object used in divination. Certain rites seem super-
 ficially to resemble the procession with the Host, but there is no
 indication of the assimilation of any ethical or conceptual element
 from Christianity during the early or formative period.¹

797 Christianity first came to the Ovimbundu with the arrival of
 three missionaries at Bailundu in March 1881.² This was during
 the reign of Ekuikui and proved to be not the least important
 event of that reign. It is not within the scope of this study to give
 a history of the work of this Mission.³ Its inception was planned
 as carefully as the times permitted, and although its subsequent
 development did not always proceed according to plan, its pro-
 gress on the whole has been of an orderly nature, and it has
 produced noteworthy results which have been evaluated by depu-
 tations, by commissions, and by other visitors from time to time.⁴

795 The amount of interdenominational co-operation achieved in
 797 this field is worthy of note. There are the missions of the

¹ There were missions of the Jesuits, Capuchins, Carmelites, &c., in Angola from 1575 until about 1800, and there were priests as chaplains of the various presidios visited by the Ovimbundu during most of their history. Major Artur de Paiva, writing in 1890 (see *Boletim Soc. Geog. Lisboa*, 1895, p. 15 f.), describes the ruins of a Roman Catholic mission which he found in Cingolo (Quingolo) and which he judged to have dated from the end of the eighteenth century. I have found no reference in any historical work to the founding or operation of such a mission. It may have been built about 1770 when Governor Souza Coutinho ordained a number of towns in the Benguela hinterland, but the absence of specific reference to it seems to indicate that its existence was short.

² Messrs. Bagster, Sanders, and Miller sent out by the A.B.C.F.M. (Boston) to inaugurate a mission in Bihe, for that region was well known from the reputation of its traders, while Bailundu and other Umbundu regions had scarcely been heard of.

³ For a brief summary of the early years see Strong, *The Story of the American Board*, pp. 336 ff.; also two articles in vol. 126 (1930) of the *Missionary Herald*, pp. 424-9; J. T. Tucker, *Drums in the Darkness*, gives a historical treatment of the work of this mission.

⁴ There have been two 'deputations' sent to the West Central Africa Mission, in 1911 and in 1930, reports of which were issued by the A.B.C.F.M. Secretaries have visited the mission in 1924, '28, '30, '34, '38, and '46, and have given their impressions either in the *Missionary Herald* or in the *United Church Record and Missionary Review*. The report of the African Education Commission dealt with the work of this mission (T. J. Jones, *Education in Africa*, pp. 40, 239 f., 245 ff.). Among visitors who have written of this work see Nevins, op. cit., chap. 7; J. Johnston, op. cit., chaps. 2, 3, and 4.

A man slave might become a blacksmith or a hunter, although his work was always for his master. He was also required to fight for his master in case of war.⁽¹⁾

RELIGION AND MAGIC

Information on Umbundu religion and magic is very slight, being practically confined to a few items collected by Hamby from his Umbundu interpreter,⁽²⁾ and a more coherent article by Tucker, primarily on divination.⁽³⁾

THE SUPREME BEING

Nkú, the Supreme Being, is thought of as the creator of mountains, rivers, sky and human beings.⁽⁴⁾ His attributes have not been described.

CONCEPTS OF SPIRIT⁽⁵⁾

The body (*etimba*) is thought of as having *camunyo* (breath or life), and containing the *ocililembo* (spirit or soul). The *ocililembo* is visible in a person's shadow in the daytime, and during sleep it has adventures of its own, which it reports to the sleeper through dreams (*olunjei*). At death it leaves the body, but lingers nearby, accompanying the body to the intermediate, still in the form of a shadow. It then becomes an *ocilole* (ghost), and may wander where it pleases. Sometimes it may be seen passing with superhuman swiftness through the village, uttering weird cries or calling pigs or chickens as the person used to do while alive. It chooses one of the households as a home, and indicates its wish to stay there by causing illness among the householders. The victim when he has learned the cause of his illness from the diviner places himself in a favourable condition to receive the spirit by performing a ceremony which includes going into a trance.⁽⁶⁾ When this ceremony has been performed the *ocilole* (ghost) becomes an *ocilele*, which appears to be a generic name for ancestral (and other?) spirits. It is not clear from Tucker's description whether the relatives of the deceased always wait for this intimation of the wish of the *ocilole* for a home, or whether the ceremonies may sometimes be performed immediately after death. Nor does she give any information regarding the relatives with whom the *ocilele* usually chooses to live. She states that spirits of paternal ancestors are less feared than those of maternal ancestors, for while the former are usually satisfied with a hunt, a beer-drinking and a feast held in their honour, the latter are malignant and may "eat" children and occasionally adults also.

The *etimba* (sing. *etimba*) "are the peaceful spirits of ancestors of long ago, who have already had the trance ceremony performed for them, and then have a home and ... standing in the other world". (Tucker does not indicate how much time must pass before a spirit becomes a *etimba*.⁽⁷⁾)

(1) Hamby, 1934, p. 394.

(2) *Op. cit.*, chap. IX.

(3) 1945.

(4) Hamby, *op. cit.*, p. 362.

(5) Based on Tucker, *op. cit.* unless otherwise stated.

(6) Tucker does not describe this ritual.

(7) It may be noted that among the Hamar people to the east, the *ocilele* are the forms taken by ancestral spirits when they wish to harass their descendants. See McCulloch 1955, p. 75.

EDUCATION

223

Among direct educational forces are the home training given 867
by parents and the mutual responsibility of children and their
mother's brother, whose reciprocal obligations have been explained.
Family life is undeniably an important institution whose power is
by no means suppressed by the strength of the village community
and tribal organization.

Initiation, which may or may not coincide with puberty, is 867
perhaps the most potent direct influence in formation of character 881
and the inculcation of principles tending to tribal solidarity.
Formerly warfare and hunting were more important than they are
today, consequently initiation rites imposing hardship and emphasiz-
ing the importance of concerted action, had a greater social value
than they have at present.

Formal instruction in industries such as iron-working, or pro-874
fessional hunting, indicates one aspect of occupational training. [868]
In these instances there are apprenticeship and an initiatory rite.
All children are, however, subject to an indirect industrial education
through the agency of play, while a few, according to desire and
aptitude, become experts in some particular occupation.

At all times the force of suggestion is at work in the home, in 869
the men's council house, and through everyday observation of the
conduct of elders. Probably folklore stories also have an indirect
educational value, because some of the fables show the desirability
of courage, honesty, and foresight, at the same time deprecating
cowardice, stupidity, and low cunning.

In chapter IX religious beliefs are discussed, and, in connection 771
with these, standards of conduct are outlined. Although the Ovim- 869
bundu have a belief in a supreme being and creator (Suku), and [776]
although they believe in survival after death, there is no evidence
to show that conduct and education are influenced by theological
beliefs. Suku, who is vaguely conceived, is far away and unin-
terested. He issues no commands. Neither is there a belief in
punishments and rewards after death. The standards of conduct
are based on utilitarian principles which secure harmony and unity.

The efficiency of the direct and indirect educational forces of 177
the Ovimbundu is attested by the history of the tribe. The indige-
nous system of education, supported by favorable environment,
consolidated these people so that they became the dominating power
in Angola. Moreover, their cohesion has been such that three
centuries of European contacts have failed to eliminate all the
basic elements of their tribal life.

775 suffers sickness or misfortune if an ancestral spirit dies a second death. A person who has had health says, "The spirit of my grandfather has been caught by *Ewari*." The name of the good spirit *Oseade* is used by a person who is suffering. Such a one says, "I have no more *Oseade*." These instances clearly reveal a belief in the dependence of human welfare on the interest of benevolent ancestral spirits.

775 After a lapse of three months I asked Ngonga again about
791 *Oseade* and *Osele*. He confirmed what he had previously said, but
753 spoke in the plural of these spirits; good spirits are called *Oseade*,
bad spirits are called *Osele*. The medicine-man will visit a hut
to foretell the future, and while there he puts a concoction in an image
to which he addresses questions. He plugs his nostrils, then in a
falsetto voice feigns answers from the image. The father of a family,
or possibly the mother's brother, may kill an animal in front of the
hut on this occasion. He then says to *Oseade*, "We hope when
[761] we kill this there will be no more sickness." The Ovimbundu are
afraid of death, and they therefore sacrifice to *Oseade*, asking that
there shall be no death in the family.

775 I do not know whether the Ovimbundu distinguish multiple
souls as some Negro tribes do. The part of a man which does not
die is sometimes called *utima*, which is the word for heart. Dr.
M. W. Ennis says that the *utima* and the *omasego* are both names
of the spirit existing in a living body. Ngonga seems certain that
every person irrespective of age, rank, and sex has a spirit, but I
could find no evidence that the Ovimbundu visualize a separation
762 of ranks or sexes after death. When a man kills himself he is buried
775 near a river so that his spirit will go to the sea, and for the same
reason a murdered man is buried near a river. At Ngalang I inquired
from other Ovimbundu people concerning suicide. Women who
commit suicide generally do so by hanging or drowning. Men stab
themselves in the heart or use a flintlock gun, the trigger of which
they pull with their toes. It is feared that the spirit of a suicide will
return to induce another suicide in the family, therefore there is
anxiety to rid the community of these spirits.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND CONDUCT

• 771
688 The Ovimbundu have many high standards of conduct, some of
which have been mentioned in dealing with the education of children.
There is, however, no idea of sin. That is to say, there are no com-
mands laid down by some authority which is more than human.

RELIGION

265

Nevertheless, the idea of crime is well developed, and there are many actions which are punishable because they contravene the laws of the tribe. Adultery is a crime on a par with theft; but adultery is not a sin. Suku, the supreme being, issues no commands. Ancestral spirits are concerned only with sacrifice and homage to themselves. There is no theory of punishment or reward in a future life according to conduct on earth.

77/
688

Perhaps *ekandu* is the only word which could express sin. An Ocimbundu would say that murder is the chief *ekandu*. "*Ekandu* is to make anything have a bad time." To send a stranger along the wrong path is *ekandu*. It would be *ekandu* to throw an animal on the fire. It is *ekandu* if a man is guilty of fornication with his wife's sister. Such an act is said to be *ekandu* only if the wife's sister is visiting the house of the culprit. The male defaulter is regarded as blameless, but the people of the village from which the wife's sister came would be expected to pay the wronged wife. Sexual offences against young children are very serious. In fact the death penalty or banishment would be inflicted, and such offences are given by the Ovimbundu as examples of *ekandu*.

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This subject of moral responsibility leads naturally into the question of laws and penalties. There are among the Ovimbundu well-defined moral codes and clearly formulated tribal laws which have been described in chapter VI.

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FUNERAL RITES

COMMONERS

In the village of Cilema in the district of Elende I witnessed the funeral rites of a boy aged twelve years. When a few hundred yards from the village, I heard sounds of drumming coming from a secluded place in the tall grass. On reaching the clearing four drummers were seen, each of whom held a tubular drum between his legs; these drums were of different lengths. The man on the left of the drumming squad played with an up and down movement of his left hand only, to provide the bass tone. Other drummers played with the palms and fingers of both hands. Thirty feet from the drummers stood a group of women who always started the rhythm for the drums by clapping their hands, and the hand-clapping continued as an accompaniment for the drums.

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Near-by, men were seated on the ground, while a large number of women walked about or sat on the ground chatting and smoking their pipes. The general impression was not one of solemnity.

CULTURAL PROCESSES

345

I cannot find in the life of the Ovimbundu anything to support the opinion of W. C. Willoughby. This writer sees in the soul of every race an instinct for god that tells upon behavior, an upward urge that makes for betterment, due to the unwearied play of the spirit of god on the souls of man. The views of E. Torday and R. J. van Wing (*Dualism in Western Bantu Religion and Social Organization*, J.R.A.I., XLVIII, p. 225) seem to be more applicable to the spiritual beliefs of the Ovimbundu.

The Ovimbundu have standards of conduct, codes of laws, crimes, and punishments. In addition to the *ekandu* (antisocial acts) already noted, *okembi* is a liar, *okusapa* means to be greedy, and such actions are deprecated; but there is no deistic injunction toward the virtues of truthfulness, hospitality, and fair dealing.

Standards of conduct and social values are preserved by the educational forces previously mentioned (chapter VII), and in addition to these there are such controls as trial by ordeal, and divination to detect guilt. The satirical song is also a form of correction, though its application may be antisocial, for instance in taunting the sexually impotent.

Music and dancing are adjuncts for the preservation of social customs and the stimulation of collective emotions on which cooperation depends. Music and dancing are also aids to magical practices. For example, a friction drum is played while a medicine-man carries out his divination with the basket, and vigorous drumming takes place during treatment of the sick. Music and dancing were again seen to be of importance at a funeral ceremony.

These instances, which are chosen from many of like kind reported in the foregoing chapters, serve to indicate an interrelationship among the main aspects of tribal life. I have endeavored to choose from personal experience those facts and incidents which illustrate the mutual dependence of language, folklore, proverbs, nature lore, food supply, and occupations.

The sexual division of labor, the connection of ceremonial with occupation, the relationship of the sexes, and the position of woman, have all been brought forward as examples of social controls.

The persistence of belief and custom despite foreign influences; the nature of government, including the psychology of prestige and leadership; spiritual beliefs; the training of children; and the value of music and dancing, have likewise been emphasized as coordinating

THE OVIMBUNDU UNDER TWO SOVEREIGNTIES

634 become *isakala* (queen) because she feared the unpleasant
 178 haunting by the spirits of former queens which is traditionally
 269 experienced by the holder of this office.¹² On one occasion
 [275] Lusase himself offered to let me into the *alalala* (the enclosure
 where the skulls of dead chiefs were kept) for the payment of
 five or ten escudos (1s. 3d. or 2s. 6d.) although the entry of
 anybody except the chief and possibly certain of his courtiers
 appears traditionally to have been forbidden under the penalty
 of death sent by the spirits. Even the surviving rites are confined
 to the chief's village; the first-fruits ceremony in which the
 [296] whole chiefdom was involved disappeared a number of years
 ago. The association general in Umbundu country between
 634 the chiefs and paganism does not provide an added ritual
 771 sanction to the chief's power, but rather links him with what is
 felt to be a dying past, essentially unimportant, at the present
 day.

692 The chief may also have some of his time occupied with
 hearing cases. A good many minor disputes are solved by local
 adjudication, but there seems to be no specific division between
 cases that ought to come to the chief and those which can be
 arbitrated by somebody else. Elders from outside a chiefdom
 may be invited to adjudicate on a particular case. The old
 formality of legal procedure has largely disappeared, probably
 because all disputes at a local level can be carried to the post—
 hence any ruling by chief or elders is essentially dependent on
 its acceptance by the disputants.

754 Accusations of sorcery are rather different from other cases
 since the post does not believe them, although such an accusa-
 tion is not in itself punishable. Sometimes suspected sorcerers
 are accused at the post of 'poisoning'.¹³ Lusase told me that
 convicted sorcerers were fined a chicken, a goat and a pig.
 Gregorio, the chief of Menga, at first said, when I asked about
 this, that it was not possible to know who was a sorcerer. When,
 rather to his surprise, I mentioned the traditional basket test, he
 agreed and explained that people convicted by this test were
 sent as labourers to the post to satisfy whatever demand was
 being made for workers.

¹² Informants. See also Hastings, p. 48.

¹³ Chibila, p. 38.